

Seattle City Council

**Neighborhoods, Arts, & Civil Rights Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, 2 PM, March 25, 2003

**Words' Worth**

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Christopher J. Jarmick**

Today's Words' Worth poet is **Ken Shiovitz**

**Ken Shiovitz** has been a published professional in the field of animal behavior and bird song, receiving his Ph.D. in 1973. Previously he has worked in public health, surgical nursing, teaching, and consulting. For the past 18 years he has been an Associate Broker with Windermere Real Estate in Seattle. For several years he has mc'd poetry venues including poetry readings at Barnes and Noble, Wits End Book Store in Wallingford and at the new Third Place Books in Ravenna.

**Flyway**

By Ken Shiovitz

A mid-May morning dawns so cool that breath clouds  
Hang expectant, then slowly vaporize, where soon  
Hot, audible pants of exhalation will accompany  
Honored scramble through mixed habitat,  
In absolute silence, save for a deafening single  
Lap of waves and song of ten thousand birds.

Wrapped in a swarm of flitting feathers, surreal peninsula,  
Point Pelee, Ontario, slices southward into Lake Erie,  
Implores flapping passes from Pelee Island, while siphoning  
Weary scattered stragglers, spread wide above white-capped waters,  
To safety of tree-belted tarmac, just beyond the grayish ribbon  
From fish carcasses rotting on sands of the broadening beach.

Bearing the bravado of sculpted models at Malibu,  
Perching migrants return to Pelee in vibrating flocks,  
Males in full breeding coloration and aggressiveness,  
Flaunting strength and song upon exposed tree tips,

Fencing, fighting, flying from forest limbs, displaying  
In a passionate swirl of lust and hate and hope and love.

It is the finest hour of Madison Avenue,  
Full scale advertising in advance, before  
House building or land purchase, before  
Territories are reached and secured, before  
Hidden nests are woven between four stalks of goldenrod,  
Even before the resting and reading up of old newspapers.

Pelee is a number on the face of a clock, a checkpoint in time,  
A balance sheet for hours of daylight, for insects ingested,  
For the days it takes to complete a journey, the days  
For searching out home and mate, and reaffirming identity,  
Days for fattening, and nesting, and raising young,  
A reminder of why the long dangerous trek is ever necessary.

Some say that autumn at Pelee is beautiful, but quiet;  
Absent are the hundreds of bird watchers and spiritualists....  
A few of the observed thousands prepare for the return hop,  
But they are nearly silent, replenishing energy spent,  
Last remnants of small groups of drab new hatchlings  
And unfulfilled parents turning back in hope of renewal.

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